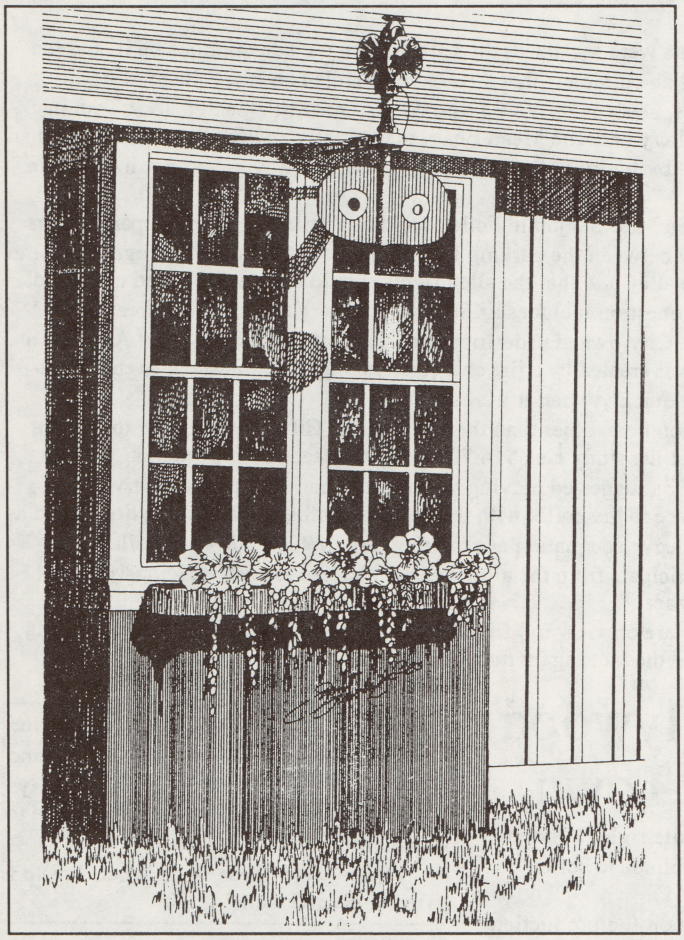
Depot Town Rag

November 1988

FREE 100% RAG CONTENT

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198



JOA update: Winter Series and Jazz Competiton suspended

WEMU and The Depot Town Association have suspended production of the Depot Town Winter Jazz Series and the WEMU Jazz Competition. The decision was reached by mutual agreement between Association principals and radio station management. Although both events were successful by almost every measure -- artistic, attendance figures, public reaction and perception -- both events were battered by rising costs, greatly increased competition for arts and entertainment dollars and difficult budget situations at both organizations.

A decison concerning the Frog Island Tent Blues and Jazz Festival, the partnership's other major venture, is pending. The1988 Frog Island Festival posted a modest profit; both groups are convinced that Frog Island remains economically viable.

WEMU and the Association think that the major reason for discontinuing the Jazz Competition is one of conflicting formats. The Competition is an educational and cultural venture, not given to turning a profit. The Heritage Festival, on the other hand, is structured in a way that requires participants to be money-making operations.

An overiding problem has been constantly increasing insurance costs. This was certainly a major factor in the Jazz Competition suspension; it is certainly the complete basic cause for cancellations of the Winter Series. By the final 1988 Winter Series, liquor liability and premises insurance costs were accounting for one third of the entire production budget, adding three dollars to the price of each admission ticket and literally sending as much money to insurance com-

JOA -continued on page three

Janet Trowbridge Francouer's drawing (above) of the bay window in the Pere Marquette depot at Whitehall-Montague will look familiar to most Ypsilantians who have watched the replica tower rise above the comparable flat bay on the MCRR depot.

The Pere Marquette version has been moved to a public park. "These shallow amenties afforded visibility in both directions along the tracks and were a common fixture of country depots." -from the Michigan Historical Society's "Brackets & Bargeboards"

You can serve on an Ypsilanti City Commission: Downtown Development Authority to return

Members of the Historic Depot Town Foundation are soliciting names of persons who wish to serve on the soon-to-be-reactivated Depot Town Development Authority (DDA) which has been languishing since its establishment five years ago.

In addition, those properties which were not included in the original boundaries of the district may now petition for inclusion. Although the Depot Town DDA includes most of . . . .

- continued on page two (see 'DDA')

Our new look

Regular readers of The Rag will note a new format beginning with this issue. No, it's not just because the Depot Town Association has a new set of officers, but more because the past president (and editor) has more time to mess around with the technology of going to press.

Bear with us as we try our wings with some new techniques. We hope this little monthly will continue to earn your home-town loyalty.

We promise not to get too slick in the up-coming issues. -ed.

DDA (continued from page one)

the business district along East Cross and North River Streets, the prooperties which were left out included City Body, Miller Motors adn the Thompson Block. Much of the block of River Street, south of the intersection of the railroad tracks is included, as are both the major City parks, Riverside and Frog Island.

The Authority provides for capturing a portion of the increased valuation of improved properties for public improvements, rather than the entire amount going to the City's general fund.

These improvements might include such items as -

- signage on City parks
- improved parking facilities
- coordinated plantings
- better waste pick-up
- garden maintenance
- welcoming signs to the district
- bicycle racks
- Farmers' Market improvements
- replication of the crossing tower
- better pedestrian lighting

Any interested parties may make themsleves known to past DTA president, Tom Dodd, via The Old Caboose, and will be included in the list about to be forwarded to Mayor Murdock. The mayor will then appoint a new commission to serve the Depot Town district.

City Body

20 East Cross Street

Front end alignment and Collision repair

North-side alley study completed

Expensive three-year City study shows little that is new.

It took the better part of City Manager, Matt Hennessee's, tenure in Ypsilanti to figure out how the alley behind the buildings on the north side of East Cross Street works but, three years and fifteen thousand dollars later, there's no new information on that disputed space.

When the Follett House Associates paid $300 for a survey of the same properties in 1983, they realized that the alley situation was exceedingly complex and concluded they would need some signage by the City if fire trucks were ever going to negotiate that tricky space in an emergency. Buildings had been built beyond their legal property lines, parking was taking place in a former railroad right-of-way and a demolished building created some question as to just where the City had authority to post and tow for illegal or improper parking.

"We'll study it," said the City. And Depot Town neighbors waited. And they waited. Several promises later, the City Manager promised again, and surveyor's markings appeared around the areas in question -- exactly as the Follett House's maps and survey had indicated years earlier.

Finally the measurements were legalized, the City Attorney made opinions on it, and the only new information was an opinion -- that the area now called an 'alley' (behind Apple Annie's, Jim MacDonald's, Designs on You, Depot Doo, Our Little Secret, J&R Trading Post, Depot Town Art Gallery and The Mean Bean) is not really a City alley, after all, but an easement granted in 1879 by Elvira Follett. That agreement, however, was not included in the City study.

The agreement, between Mrs. Benjamin Follett and the Ypsilanti Paper company, refers to the portion of the alley between the parking lot and the Follett House. She agareed not to build upon or close up the alley and that the alley rights should run with the land conveyed.

The rest of the space in question includes a City-owned triangle from Rice Street to the Freight House, and the City-owned pedestrian walkway between Cross Street Antiques and Jim MacDonald's which was created by a fire and quick razing of debris about twenty years ago. (The City can move quickly when it wants to.)

The only new information here, other than the fact that the City does not plan to enforce parking regulations, is that the study cost $14,700 more the second time around. City Fire Inspector, Bill Sturbank, has suggested moving the diagonal parking spaces, reserved for Standard Printing, one space to the north, with the vacated southern space being designated as a "fire lane." This would leave adequate space to bring large vehicles down the alley.

Meanwhile, building pricipals from the alley's east end agree to park judiciously in that congested and contested space.

The results of the study are on view in Mike Ager's office at City Hall. Anyone wishing to see the drawings or read the facts again may do so.

Chevy commercial shot in Our Town

How much is on-street parking worth to the clientele of local merchants? Can we survive two days without it? Two days in October put these questions to the test when Melody Films, of Burbank, California, came here to film a commercial for General Motors.

Kleig lights, fog machines and giant reflectors loomed outside of the Wolverine Grill, Miller Motor Sales and Ike's Depot Town Barbershop as professional actors tried to look like local yokels ogling the new cars.

Preparations for the filming included wetting down the street for more contrast and wiring fake autumn leaves into the trees in front of Aubree's Saloon.Sseveral potted treeswere also added to the street scape.

When the interior shots were made at Jack Miller's Hudson garage, the ad crew didn't approve of the floor coloring and installed new carpeting. The light from the south windows wasn't quite right, either, so they put in tiny venetian blinds to soften the effect.

The thirty-five people on the production crew were augmented by the Ypsilanti police and dozens of local street watchers who turn out for everything that goes on in this town.

Some of the autos in the scenes came from Ypsilanti Chevrolet dealer, Jack Webb's, collection.

Ike Rednour, of Ike's Depot Town Barbershop, may be the onlyfamiliar face to appear in these slickers, since he rose at 4 a.m. on the final day of shooting to cut an actor's hair in one of the sketches. As he did so, a truck load of new Chevys stopped out in front.

All these preparations will be boiled down to fifteen seconds of air time on the three major networks and the colorful ad is expected to be aired during the November election.

Here's Hollywood -

Depot Towners will be watching for familiar scenes on their own TV sets and many will still be talking about the days when Hollywood (well, Burbank) came to Ypsilanti.

Where were these guys when Preston Tucker needed them?

Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market

in historic Depot Town

Every Wed. & Sat.

8 a.m. — 3 p.m.

Another great party!

Both the Ypsilanti Press's announcement *and* the reatraction were incorrect, but a goodly number of the district's tots found the correct starting time, anyway. The annual Hallowe'en Party for the neighborhood kids can still be called a success. More than 60 young people showed up for the event after 'begging' in the Cross and River Street shops.

Tim Wise (of The Mean Bean) performed his Big Magic Show for the second year in a row and the Depot Town Artists & Artisans awarded prizes from district businesses for 'safe and creative' home-made costumes.

DTA president, Jacob Guter, says "Thanks!" to all who helped make this year's Hallowe'en party another warm success.

(Why is it that only The Rag still uses 'Hallowe'en' in the contracted form? Are we old fashioned, or what? -ed)

Harvest time in the City

Depot Town's many flower beds had the hardest growing season in recent memory this past summer. As if it wasn't hard enough carrying all that water to the several homely planter/bunkers in the block, the summer-long drought made it necessary to water almost continuously to save the scrawny maple trees that peek through the concrete abuttments.

Most of the surrounding flowers barely made it through, but, as the season ended, it seemed that the district's gardeners succeeded once again. The diverse blooms gave a homey, almost corny touch to the district and many travelers marveled at the authentic, old-time values seen in these simple beds of blooms.

Some have said that, when we get the Depot Town Development Authority under way again, we can hire a crew to do all that work and create a unified flow of blossoms much in the manner of the born-again downtowns in Saline and Plymouth. Meantime, we'll do the best we can watering one bed at a time

Thanks, neighbors. Your motley posies made a hard summer bearable.

RIVER ARTWORKS
CUSTOM FRAMING
DESIGNER MATS
48 E. CROSS
DEPOT TOWN
482-8785

J.O.A. reached (continued from page one)

anies as it was to the three bands performing on stage that evening. The cash bar operation acted as a pad against admission ticket income. Yet, with insurance costs increasing 500% in seven years, that pad had worn dangerously thin.

By moving away from booking Detroit area talent to much better known national acts, the series cold have increased its revenue. But it would have greatly increased the financial risk for two quite equity-poor organizations and defeated a basic purpose of the shows -- recyling entertainment dollars into the local economy and fostering greatly increased appreciation of the areas' resident artists. The problem is actually a microcosm of a much larger conundrum affecting opera companies, symphony orchestras, museums and folk and jazz nighclubs: Unless a presentation involves a superstar, its chances of survival are problematic. This "superstar consciousness" is affecting the very root of culture -- the local artist.

The Association and WEMU have many people to thank for the past successes: Eastern Michigan University, the many students at WEMU who produced the technical aspects of the event, the many more volunteersprovided by the DTA, Gary Urick and the City of Ypsilanti, supportive members of the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival and radio stations and newspapers that gave these events consistent and appreciative coverage, particularly The Ann Arbor News, The Ann Arbor Observer, WJZZ, WDET, and, initially, The Ypsilanti Press. Special thanks also go to WEMU's Jim Dulzo and DTA's Carolyn McKeever, who have co-produced both events since their inception.

Cancellation of the 1989 Winter Jazz Series and Jazz Competition suspends a tradition born at the Heritage Festival in 1981, where the first WEMU Jazz Competition was staged on August 28,29 and 30. It marked the beginning of a unique collaboration between a neighborhood improvement group and a major university's public radio station. The winner of that first Competition, alto saxophonist David Mann, has since moved on to New York City, where he has recorded his own album on a major label and continues to work with some of the music's greatest artists.

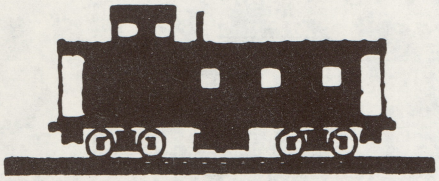
That tradition of picking true winners continued throughout the Competition's eight-year run. The Ujima Quintet, Koke McKesson, Harvey Thompson and Suzanne Lane have become very well known throughout the Detroit jazz scene, thanks largely to the exposure they gained as winners of the Competition. All 120 sets performed by constestants were broadcast live on WEMU and presented free of charge to Festival-goers, providing Ypsilanti's major community event with a continuous show. It was truly educational, exposing jazz to people who rarely get a chance to hear it, while giving younger musicians an opportunity to perform in front of a critical and attentive audience. Well over $10,000 in prize money, scholarships to Berklee College of Music and well-recorded tapes of Competition performances were awarded to these musicians. Thousands of people flocked to the late shows, where listening and dancing to top Detroit rhythm and blues bands kept the Heritage party going.

The Depot Town Winter Jazz Series was launched on December 12, 1981, hot on the heels of a successful first Jazz Competition. Mining the rich lode of Detroit area jazz, blues and rhythm and blues, the Series presented Marcus Belgrave, Roy Brooks, Lyman Woodard, the big bands of the late J.C. Heard, Jimmy Wilkins, Austin/Moro and Katalenic/Kwek, the small groups of Kenny Cox, Charles Boles, Francisco Mora, White/Margitza, Percy Gabriel, James Dapogney, Mr. B., Kamau Kenyatta, Rayse Biggs, Joe LoDuca and Russell Green, The Trinidad/Tripoli Steel Band and the blues bands of Eddie Burns,Juanita McCray, Little Sonny, Robert Penn, the Progressive Blues Band and many others.

These events remain unique and special to the people who came to them from Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Detroit and northern Ohio. By drawing so many thousands of people from the surroundings area, the DTA and WEMU are proud to have performed their mission of presenting great areas jazz and blues in a way that clearly helps the local cultural economy.

Ted's Auto Electric
307 North River • 483-1238

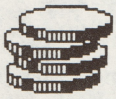
City Radiator
100 North River • 483-2248



A 20 October 1988

Vice president, Paul Fetters, chaired in the absence of Jacob Guter who was out of town on business.

Treasury - $7478.66 general fund
1430.06 Merchants
635.23 Artists
(3604.30) Rag
4.22 Caboose
$5409.13 Balance



- with Rag, Heritage Festival and premise liabililty insurance bills all past due.

Transfered $1000 from merchants' lighting fund to general fund.

Jazz Operating Agreement re-ported by Carolyn McKeever (see page one).

September minutes approved.

Hallowe'en kids' party needs 10 volunteers. Artists will judge costumes.

Budget & Events -

Festival of Lights 'screw-in- party is 1 p.m. Sunday, October 23 in the Freight House. Domino's light show is cancelled and we may get some of their displays.

Depot Town **building light check** is 6 p.m. Friday, October 28. Paul has replacement bulbs at River Art Works.

'Welcome' sign on theFollett House is set to go on at 6:00 p.m. daily.

NIFTY (New Initiative For Tourism in Ypsilanti) - working with Artists & Artisans. No response from EMU Marketing Department on intern assignment.

Rag report - New desktop publishing will set camera-ready monthly copy for Standard Printing for more control of accuracy and cost.

$250 collected from sponsors, more coming in. President Guter will help Gary McKeever with collections.

2nd Vice Presidents -

Foundation will meet November 3rd with those interested in being appointed to DDA (see page one).

Engineering Society - Kids are willing to work on public or private neighborhood projects. Just leave your job request in the Caboose mail slot and they will respond.

Artists & Artisans - Newsletter shows many activities and Gallery re-organization.

Engine Club will meet October 27 to plan the annual Christmas dinner.

November 1988

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of the block:

Foundation
8 p.m. Thursday, 11/3
in The Old Caboose

Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 11/17
in The Old Caboose

Artists & Artisans
7:30 p.m. Monday, 11/21
Depot Town Art Gallery
19 East Cross Street

Festival of Lights
Grand 'Turn-On'
6:00 p.m.Sunday, 11/20
Riverside Park

Antique Engine Club
7:30 p.m. Friday, 11/25
Freight House Coffee Shop

Mike Ager, of City Hall -

$20,000 transfer from Gary Owen **lighting $** to Freight House deck repair still in progress.

Planning Commission **rezoning** from M-1 to Business underway as a result of the new Depot Town Master Plan. Some properties behind Miller Motors have been exempted. Final reading at City Council November 21.(see page five).

Alley Survey reviewed again. Fire inspector, Bill Strubank, suggests moving traingle parking spaces one unit north, and marking southern space as "fire lane." All agree. Discussion of survey findings, Elvira Follett's legacy, neighborly cooperations (see page two).

Steve Noppe presented a plan for publishing a **poster/map** of the City, but Depot Town will be represented only by those businesses wishing to subscribe individually.

Golden Goose Awards to those who take more from the area than they are willing to give.

Best Yet Awards to Bonni & Ed Fine and Lynn Radke (Apple Annie) & Rick Talbot who each had baby boys last month.

Adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Officially, it's Jacob, not Jake

New DTA president, Jacob Guter, noticed how official his name looked in last month's RAG, and suggests that we call him 'Jake' on the street, but as long as we're publising in such elegant print, why not call him 'Jacob' in that medium?

O.K., Jake.

Just like in Nebraska

Sept. 22, 1988

The Depot Town Association:

We wish to commend the Old Town Restaurant for the excellent food they serve. We had the pleasure of eating dinner and a breakfast there just the 1st week in Sept. while visiting our son and daughter-in law who lives a few miles from there, in Ann Arbor.

We were so glad he took us to this place, as we enjoyed the good food and the service. The place was staffed with such friendly people.

Our son and daughter-in law frequent the Restaurant and sure have picked one that tastes like home cooking. Everything was so excellent.

We will no doubt be in again on our next trip there.

Thank you
Sincerely,
Leon & Jo Schaefer
1007 Georgia Avenue
Norfolk, NE 68701

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG
Tom Dodd, editor
A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.
Depot Town Association, Inc.
Jacob Guter, president
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Miller's SINCE 1896
ICE CREAM
Open All Year!
42 E. CROSS
HISTORIC DEPOT TOWN

483-3637
Our Little Secret
Resale Clothing & Other Niceties
23 E. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
In Historic Depot Town

HANSEN'S
STANDARD PRINTING
35 E. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
483-0339

Mayor's attendance at events:

West-side politicoes have been going after Hizzoner lately, but Depot Towners haven't noticed any absence of mayorality mannerliness. Pete Murdockhas been a constant presence in this quarter of the City -- at the Saturday morning coffee klatsch in the Farmers' Market, at a Heritage Foundation session the old Masonic ballroom, at planning meetings for Association, Foundation and the re-birthing of the Depot Town Development Authority.

Perhaps those folks who want a 'party mayor' should consider what they can expect from a $7000 annual position. Extra appearances could maybe include complimentary tickets, limo pick-up and delivery, and maybe even a rented suit and tie now and then. Throw those in, and he's sure to show up.

Meanwhile, for the pittance we pay him, let's just be glad that he shows up for as many City Council meetings as he does. Have you ever sat through one of those deadly sessions? They often go on longer than the United Nations Security Council.

Say, isn't that Pete sitting over there at the end of the bar? Hi, Your Honor!

City Body façade done - - - in spite of it all

After all those nasty personal communications were made public in the letters column of The Ypsilanti Press, many locals think it's time The Press did a photo feature on that gorgeous new façade on the City Body building. Without reviewing all the ins and outs of the recent brouhaha, why not show the world how beautifully the project was in its final form?

Accompanying those acrimonious epistles was a plea for citizens to write in and tell how terrible the Historic District Commission had been to them. Conspicuous in the absence of responses was the silent testimonial that such guarantees have certainly been good for business down in Depot Town. No single piece of legislation has done as much to preserve the quality of life (and shopping) in this once-depressed commercial district.

YPSILANTI RECYCLING PROJECT

651 Rice Street

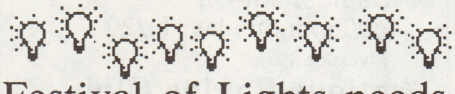
(just north of the Farmers' Market in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town

Open every Saturday

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Collecting newspaper, glass, used motor oil and ferrous cans

A non-profit organization



Festival of Lights needs Depot Town's help

The third annual Festival of Lights will take place in Riverside Park from November 20 through January 1, 1989, and will draw nearly as many people as Heritage Festival - but over a longer period of time.

Festival of Lights chair, Carolyn McKeever, anticipates a larger crowd this year, due partly to the fact that the Domino's Farms' light show won't be going up. "We're hoping to see Depot Town help out again this year," says Carolyn, a past DTA president and former jazz empressario from the block.

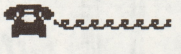
This is McKeever's second year as chair of the winter event which won a State of Michigan award for drawing so many people to such a lovely seasonal spectacle.

"We really like to emphasize the personal, intimate quality of the display of lights down in the park. The hosts put in a lot of hours, but it's really appreciated by those who come to see the lights," said Carolyn.

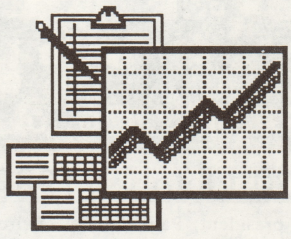
Hosts greet both walkers and drivers at the entry and the exit of the free display of holiday theme lighting. Shifts for the teams of two, three or four are 6-8 p.m. and 8-10 p.m.

"It's a cold, wet situation which spreads warmth all over the area. I sure hope Depot Town will be with us again this year," said Carolyn.

Volunteers should call the Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce at 482-4920.



Merchants set Sunday, December 4th for the annual
VICTORIAN HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSES
Watch for bulletins and flyers in late November!



City Council adopts a new Master Plan for Depot Town district

City Council approved a new Master Plan for the district at its October 17th meeting.The September DTA meeting previewed City Planner, Andrea Brown's proposal to City Council and gave it their stamp of approval.

The first 'master plan' since the 1976 'Depot Town Plan' was approved by the City Planning Commission and City Council the new concept takes over where the other one finished -- several years ahead of its projected ten-year prediction.

The Master Plan will rezone manufacturing into general business, plan for adequate parking on the south side of East Cross Street, and focus upon the Huron River as a 'primary asset' to the district.

Depot Town Art Gallery, at 19 East Cross, opened in August

by the Depot Town Artists & Artisans group, is moving into the holiday season with a full schedule of shows, coffee houses, a 'little gallery' for children's work and low-cost items, and new oppor- tunities for artsists in the areas.

Organizers of the Gallery, Mary Gentry and Louise Flory, have been on the scene since mid-summer and are stepping back their involvement to see if a true 'artist cooperative' will take hold here.

After monthly shows since Heritage Festival, October saw two shows go up, the most recent being "From the Darkside," which accompanied the All Hallows' Eve Ball, featuring costumes in the theme of the holiday.

A full schedule is planned for the Victorian Holiday running through the month of December.

J&R TRADING POST
GENERAL STORE
"A blend of past & present, with an eye on the future!"
21 East Cross • 483-5870

Good Food

Aubree's Saloon
& Second Floor
39 East Cross Street

•

Old Town
Restaurant
Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
38 East Cross Street

•

Sidetrack
Good Food, Good Drinks
Good Times
56 East Cross Street
483-1053

•

The Mean Bean
"Gourmet Mexican"
Black beans are our specialty
17 East Cross Street

•

37 East Cross • 483-4555

RAGTIME
They're still playing
our song!

Down in
Depot Town

"Everybody's coming back,
down between the River
and the Railroad track . . . ."

COMING SOON TO DEPOT TOWN
- A **paint store** at 11 East Cross.
- **Futons** to the former 'Vintage Passion' location -- with a second outlet in Ann Arbor's Kerrytown.
- **T-shirts** at Heritage Square. You saw their preview at Heritage Fest.
- A **book store** next to Miller's Ice Cream Parlor.
- **Electricity** - in the 'walk / don't walk' signals at the new crossing.
- **Victorian Holiday** kicks off on Sunday, December 4th, carrying on an old Depot Town tradition of not starting the Christmas shopping season right after the 4th of July Parade. It'll just be featured in December!

Hon's Flowers
& Fancies
46 East Cross 482-2124

Antiques

Jim MacDonald's Antiques
&
Apple Annie's Vintage Clothing
29 East Cross • 481-0555

Thompson Building Mall
Over 4000 square feet of dealers
412 North River • 484-4288

Something for Everyone
CROSS STREET ANTIQUES
33 East Cross Street
Antiques Bought & Sold
Hours: Tues - Sun 11-5
482-4525

We love to buy
Antiques
DEPOT EXHANGE ANTIQUES
54 E. Cross • 482-1780
Next to Sidetrack
Professional Stripping & Refinishing

B&D Retail

Plumbing & Heating

487-1510

at the
Ypsilanti Farmers Market
MESSINA'S
CHEESE
483-1480

Depot Doo
Fine Design in
Hair Style
25 East Cross Street • 484-3045

Big Bob's
Mazazines
Magazines · Comics · Posters
50 East Cross · 485-4930

Ike's
Depot Barbershop
40 East Cross Street
483-6300

YPSI FOOD COOP
WHOLE NATURAL FOOD IN BULK
OR SMALL QUANTITIES
M.T.Th.F. 10-7 Wed. 10-9 312 N. River
483-1520 Sat. 9-7 Sun. 12-5